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ABSTRACT

This paper demonstrates how a linguistic analysis of lifelong learning as a cultural keyword can be carried out in the context of a particular socioeconomic model with which it is associated, human capital, focusing on the dynamics of their relationship. Study data include a 900,000-word corpus of the recent British and European Union literature on lifelong learning (official publications, newspaper reports, and educational critiques), as well as a larger standard corpus used for reference. Using corpus linguistic methods to study its collocational behavior, key features of the syntax and semantics of lifelong learning are compared with the behavior of the word "learning" as it occurs in general use, and the sociocultural connotations of these features are interpreted and compared with the assumptions of human capital theory. The recurrent wordings that occur in the environment of lifelong learning demonstrate that its participants and processes are extending the meaning of "learning" as a socioeconomic activity and make it possible to show how linguistic categories become social categories). (Contains 37 references.) (SM)

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LIFELONG LEARNING, HUMAN CAPITAL, AND THE SOUNDBITE

ALISON PIPER

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Lifelong learning, human capital, and the soundbite

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"Lifelong learning" has become a keyword, a soundbite, for the late 1990s. While overtly belonging within the domain of education, it contributes to a developing public and official discourse in which the nature and purposes of learning are being reconstructed. The paper demonstrates how a linguistic analysis of "lifelong learning" as a cultural keyword can be carried out in the context of a particular socio-economic model with which it is associated—human capital—so as to shed light on the dynamics of their relationship. The data of the study consist of a 900,000-word corpus of the recent British and EU literature of lifelong learning—official publications, newspaper reports and educational critiques—and a very large standard corpus which is used for reference. Using corpus linguistic methods to study its collocational behaviour, key features of the syntax and semantics of "lifelong learning" are compared with the behaviour of the word "learning" as it occurs in general use, and the socio-cultural connotations of these features are interpreted and compared with the assumptions of human capital theory. The recurrent wordings which occur in the environment of "lifelong learning" demonstrate that its participants and processes are extending the meaning of "learning" as a socio-economic activity and make it possible to show how "linguistic categories become social categories" (Stubbs 1996b:194).

Introduction

In May 1997 New Labour swept to power crying, among other things, "education, education and education", a grand and high-minded soundbite which subsumed many others such as "lifelong learning". Like all soundbites *lifelong learning* generates a lofty cynicism among many of the chattering classes, who of course have all benefited from it but without ever needing to find a name for it. It is also generating a discourse all of its own, both within and outside the UK, in the form of quantities of official policy documents (see Appendix 2) and publicly-funded research (DfEE 1998b; Economic and Social Research Council 1997).

For a linguist the arrival of a new and powerful lexical item in socio-political discourse is always a matter of interest, particularly when, as is generally the case, it extends the use of an old and familiar word such as *learning*. The first purpose of this paper is therefore to investigate what *learning* appears to mean in the expression *lifelong learning*, and how this might be different from its meaning, or meanings, when used in unmodified form or with different modifications. I shall do this by comparing the collocations of *learning* as it is distributed across a large general corpus (the Cobuild/University of Birmingham Bank of English) and across a smaller specialised corpus of contemporary political and educational policy texts dealing with lifelong learning. The second purpose of the paper is to assess how far this comparative linguistic analysis supports the claim that notions like *a learning society*, of which lifelong learning is a part, are located within a particular economic model—the theory of "human capital". Taking a systemic-functional approach to the analysis of the data, I will examine *lifelong learning* in terms of its processes and participants, both linguistic and social, and I will use my linguistic analysis to illustrate how patterns of collocation may or may not relate a word or expression to a particular socio-economic view of the world.

I take as my theoretical and methodological starting point the notion of the "cultural keyword" as examined by Stubbs (Stubbs 1996a) and I have relied significantly on his discussion. I look at the discourse of lifelong learning, where I take discourse to mean "recurrent phrases and conventional ways of talking, which circulate in the social world,

and which form a constellation of repeated meanings" (*op.cit*:158). In his examination of the socio-political discourse of "language" and its relationship with education and with nation, Stubbs points out that "much of this discourse is characterised by debate around a relatively small set of key words which frequently recur" (*op.cit*:159), a debate which is itself part of a much larger ideological debate. These words and "ideas gain stability when they fit into a schema" (162), although these schema are likely to vary with different groups. Stubbs proposes that linguists can "help to analyse some of the rhetoric involved in such issues" (165) through the detailed documentation of the use of key words, which can be produced through the use of corpora. Thus while in broad sociolinguistic terms I am investigating an example of the technologisation of discourse (see Fairclough 1996), I do so through the interpretation of quantitative corpus data rather than textual exegesis.

Organisation of the paper

The paper begins with a brief review of the literature of lifelong learning from which I infer some of the major discourses within which it appears to be located. After introducing the notion of human capital, I then discuss the most common meanings and grammatical forms of the verb *learn* and present some hypotheses which suggest ways in which the linguistic behaviour of *lifelong learning* might link it with human capital theory. I then set out the data and methodology of the study. The main part of the paper examines firstly the semantic and syntactic behaviour of *lifelong learning* and secondly the nature and roles of the human participants who engage with it. Finally I draw some conclusions about the relationship of lifelong learning with human capital, and suggest some directions for future research.

The literature of lifelong learning

Lifelong learning is the subject of a growing literature, of which this short review presents items chosen because they contain the expression in the title. A search of the Library of Congress and British Library on-line catalogues in June 1998 produced 88 references, the earliest examples being in the late 1960s, mostly on the theme of adult-, continuing-, non-formal-, community-, literacy- education. This theme continued for a decade or so primarily based in the USA although with some studies of, for example, India, Sweden, the Arab states and with occasional orientations towards people categorised as disadvantaged, such as pensioners. Contemporary lifelong learning paradigms are first apparent in 1979-1980, with several examples from a series entitled *Future Directions for a Learning Society*. In the mid 1980s titles on lifelong learning appeared in Britain and New Zealand, extending as the 1990s progressed to reports from Scandinavia and other Western European countries, enlivened by an intervention from the Catholic Church in 1991 (United States Catholic Conference 1991) and sustained globally over the period by a number of reports under the auspices of UNESCO. Also in the 1990s the notion of self directed learning enters the discourse (Long 1990) and indeed lifelong learning seems to be a sociable concept, happiest in combination with others, as in (Edwards 1997) which is also catalogued under the keywords "distance learning", "open learning" and "postmodernism". This universal applicability of lifelong learning reaches its climax in (Busse 1993) (or perhaps this was just an over-enthusiastic library cataloguer), which is also an early example of its current economic and vocational orientation. After the mid 1990s come thick and fast not just book titles and conference proceedings (e.g. Coffield 1996; Longworth and Davies 1996; Society for Research into Higher Education 1997) but political statements and manifestos, both with (European Commission 1997; Fryer 1997; OECD 1997) and without (Department for Education and Employment 1998; European Commission 1995; Further Education Funding Council 1997; Higher Education Funding Council for England 1997) explicit titular mention of lifelong learning.

I therefore begin the paper with an initial interpretation of the notion of lifelong learning, based on a study of documents produced by governments or quasi governmental organisations. By way of illustration I have chosen a few extracts from sections of these documents which define or introduce, explicitly or otherwise, their particular version of lifelong learning (see Appendix 1). A rough and ready analysis of these extracts reveals four important discourses in which it occurs:

Economic life
- prosperity
- human capital
- investment
- macroeconomic policies or specific labour market action
- the knowledge-based, global economy
- employment, employability

Change and the uncertainty of the future
- twenty-first century
- change
- coping, updating

Education and knowledge
- skills and competence
- knowledge and understanding
- education and training
- wide access

Broad socio-political notions
- culture and society
- citizenship
- family and social groups
- personal fulfilment

This confluence of social, economic and educational issues is a reminder of Durkheim's proposition that change and conflict in education is symptomatic of major social change. Most are also issues central to the theory of human capital, suggesting that lifelong learning is aligned with this socio-economic model both explicitly and implicitly.

Human capital

The analogy between the productive capacity of physical capital and that of educated workers was pointed out originally by Adam Smith, although the concept of educational expenditure as a form of investment was not developed until the early 1960s by the US economists Schultz and Becker. Thus "the concept of human capital refers to the fact that human beings invest in themselves, by means of education, training, or other activities, which raises their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings" (Woodhall 1995:24). Human capital research has concentrated on three areas—measuring the rate of return to investment in human capital, assessing the profitability of human versus physical capital, and assessing how far human capital increases workers' productivity—but the relationship of human capital to economic growth has turned out to be complex and geographically variable. Carnoy, the editor of the 1995 International Encyclopedia of Economics of Education claims that although it is generally believed that investment in schooling leads to higher productivity, "researchers have not, as scientists, made a persuasive empirical case for such causality" [Carnoy, 1995 #51:2).

Carnoy defines human capital in terms of "technical knowledge and the capacity to respond rapidly to change", together forming a "crucial input into the production process" (*op.cit*:1). Nowadays the European Commission calls for its member states to treat capital investment and investment in training on an equal basis, so that "companies which have made a special effort in training can enter some of this investment in their balance sheet as part of their intangible assets" (European Commission 1995: Section V:56). Human capital theory is therefore located not just within the discourse of economic life but also within the discourses of change and knowledge which I have already associated with lifelong learning.

The theory has moved on from its original input-output model and from the assumption of "exogenously stimulated growth or efficiency" (Carnoy 1995:2), or investment, technology and management input from outside the organisation or institution. One proposal as to the value of a worker with additional education is that such a person can make better decisions, except that the drawback to this proposal is that in most workplaces very few employees are senior enough to have decision-making responsibility. However, "in the new organisations of production associated with the new international economy and the information age" this is not necessarily any longer the case and "relations in the workplace are not only crucial to productivity, but the human capital-productivity relation is wrapped up in the social relations between management and labor" (*ibid*:3). Where these relations allow for greater participation in decision-making and where there are innovation networks between companies and other public and educational institutions, human capital can contribute to higher productivity and economic growth.

Investment in human capital is thus more than investment in skills development. Possession of educational qualifications demonstrates not just that an individual has acquired knowledge and skills, but has certain abilities, aptitudes and attitudes which have been shaped and developed by the educational process itself , which is why employers continue to prefer educated workers (Woodhall 1995: 27). In today's workplaces, there is a two-way relationship between the quality of human capital and the organisation of production and innovation, a relationship which assumes that productivity is "a self-generating process *endogenous* to firms and economies" (Carnoy 1995:3 my italics). In other words, productivity is now no longer only generated externally. This assumption in turn draws attention to the complexity of the relationships between individual human capacities and organisations of work, between education and income, between income distribution and economic development, between schools, families and work, and between public and private provision of education. These extend the discourse of human capital into the much broader social topics which made up the last of my four lifelong learning discourses above.

Schuller, in a paper for a conference at Newcastle University entitled *A national stratagy for lifelong learning* sponsored by, among others, the European Union, emphasises the orientation of human capital theory towards the individual (Schuller 1996). He contrasts it with the notion of "social capital" advanced by political scientists and sociologists (Coleman 1988; Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1995), and since these contrasts will be of interest in the linguistic analysis which follows, I quote his summary of them in full.

- human capital focus on the individual agent, social capital on networks and relationships

- human capital assumes economic rationality, and transparency of information; social capital assumes that most things are seen through lenses of values and norms which are socially shaped

- human capital measures inputs by reference to duration of education or numbers of qualification; social capital by the strength of mutual obligation and civic engagement

- human capital measures output in term of individual income or productivity levels; social capital in terms of quality of life (Schuller 1996:122).

The drawing of such a clear line between the concepts of human and social capital seems to me to conflict with the Carnoy account, which being an economic one never mentions social capital but which suggests a much more integrated relationship between economic and social theory. However, my purpose is not to critique the notion of human capital but to examine its relations with language, which I will proceed to do.

Learn and *learning*

The first of the five definitions of the verb *learn* in the Cobuild dictionary says that "if you learn something or learn to do something, you get knowledge of it or skill in doing it by your own efforts and hard work, for example by studying a subject at school"; the example sentences are *children learn foreign languages very easily* and *he had never learned to read and write*. Other dictionaries, but not Cobuild, include the proposition that learning often involves being taught, so it is interesting to note this 1987 concordance-based lexicographical emphasis on the notion of personal responsibility. In systemic-functional terms, the verb *learn* represents a mental process directed at a Phenomenon by a Senser, an act which is carried out by a human agent.

In the Cobuild dictionary the nominalised form *learning* is presented within this first definition, although *learning* in the two example sentences exhibits different syntactic behaviour—*he found learning very difficult* and *our aim was to design an entirely new learning programme*. In the first, *learning* is a verbal noun of mental process, while in the second this nominalised process is used as a classifying adjective. Through this process of what Halliday calls grammatical metaphor (Halliday 1994), *learning* has been objectified and made non-finite. The order in which these examples are presented progressively removes first the target or purpose of the process, the Phenomenon, secondly the human agent, the *Senser*, and thirdly any sense of the time at which the mental process occurred in relation to the time of the statement. We do not know what it was that "he" found difficult to learn so we are left to presume that it was anything and everything throughout some unspecified period. *New learning programme* is somewhat ambiguous as to its grammar, so that the adjectival noun *learning* could represent a rank-shifted prepositional qualifier—*new programme of learning*—or a rank-shifted clause—*new programme which involves learning*. And now, since we no longer know what is being learned or who is learning it or when, *learning* has lost its Senser as well as its Phenomenon.

The reification of the *learning* process is not new. The CD Rom OED gives as its first definition of *learning* a similar meaning to Cobuild and other dictionaries, namely "the action of the verb *learn*" and "the action of receiving instruction or acquiring knowledge". *Learning* is an old usage, and the OED's first reference is to a 9th century text about King Alfred, while the adjectival use has its first reference in 1922 from a psychology text concerning a *learning curve*. In their excellent study of the word *training*, Campanelli and Channell point out that the "separation of expressions into process and product may not be clear cut" and that reference to one implies the other (1994:28). This is certainly the case with *learning*, which means both what is acquired and the process of acquiring it.

Also of interest to my study is the third Cobuild definition—"if people learn to do something, they gradually become able to do something or to accept something, especially by changing their attitudes". Examples here are *we still have to learn how to live peacefully, you will have to learn to accept my authority, inflation is something that people have learned to live with*. Here we still have human agents and phenomena but the nature of the mental process is more emotional than cognitive and the phenomena socio-economic and hence more abstract.

The attention paid in these Cobuild entries to personal responsibility and changing attitudes, is cognate both with elements of human capital theory and with the documentation of lifelong learning from which I quoted my earlier examples, and they prefigure my analysis of the nominalised uses of *learning* in my lifelong learning corpus. Here are two nominalisations from current educational discourse. Firstly there is the widespread use of the phrase *learning outcomes*, where these are outcomes *of* learning, a phrase often used as a heading followed by a description of each outcome. This is a use where the Senser (or learner) is implied, having probably been specified elsewhere in the text, and the Phenomenon is itemised as a list. Secondly, institutions such as the British government and the European Union extol the socio-economic virtues of the *learning society*, presumably *a society which learns* or *a society where learning takes place*, although what it is that is learned and by whom is unspecified. It is these uses of *learning*—with a Senser implied or absent, or Phenomenon-free, or with a generic Phenomenon—that appear to be the primary uses of *learning* in policy documents of a governmental or institutional nature.

Hypotheses

In terms of the occurrence of *learn* and *learning* in everyday life, the Cobuild *Grammar Patterns* volume on verbs (COBUILD 1996) lists *learn* as among the most frequent verbs in English, together in its immediate alphabetic vicinity with *know, like, live, look* and *make*. The verbal form and its inflections are far more commonly used than the nominalisation, occurring in the 57-million word Bank of English corpus 12952 times as against 491 for the noun *learning*, that is nearly 28 times more frequently. This difference is apparent right across the corpus, with no obvious variance between the spoken/ephemeral and the more heavyweight sub-corpora. In itself this imbalance in use between verbal and nominal forms is so routine as to be trivial; similarly frequent mental process verbs like *know and write* occur in the same pattern. However, in the literature of lifelong learning what I am interested in is firstly how the nominalisation of *learning* enacts its role as a participant in socio-economic processes, and secondly the part played by human agency when sensers and phenomena are mostly absent from the learning activity. The positive spin that lifelong learning receives in the proliferation of official texts associated with it and the ambiguity of human agency in its processes both give the impression that it is an end in itself, disengaged from the individual subject and contributing to some inexorable socio-economic purpose. This is an impression whose accuracy I want to examine through linguistic analysis.

Human capital is theorised as contributing to economic growth, to the management of change and to the increase of knowledge and skill, all these also being roles enacted by lifelong learning. It also manifests a similar absence of actual human agency, although as with lifelong learning, this is implicit in the theory. Since human actors, or "social actors" (e.g. van Leeuwen 1996), must by definition be part of both human capital and of the process of lifelong learning, they must exist in both discourses in some guise or another, although it remains to be seen who is included and who is excluded. If lifelong learning is related to human capital theory, then we might expect that the human participants in the learning process will be represented in terms of their social and economic rationality and that they will be defined in terms of generic social groupings, particularly as groups whose relation to learning is either as producers/investors or consumers/beneficiaries of investment.

Data, tools and methods

For the purposes of the study I created a 900,000 word corpus of recent British and EU literature of lifelong learning, largely official or semi-official publications plus some rather more reflective and critical texts, henceforward referred to as the LL corpus. Much of this material was retrieved via the Internet, and all the component documents are listed in

Appendix 2. As a reference corpus I used the Cobuild subscription corpus of 57 million words, also known as the Bank of English. The British literature was accessed mostly via the Lifelong Learning website of the Department for Education and Employment or was available on CD Rom, while the European documentation was identified using *lifelong learning* as a search term on the European Commissions website. Lifelong learning is associated with all types of post-school education, and the documents included in the corpus are nearly all general in their orientation, although by implication they tend to deal with further or vocational education. I did nevertheless include the Dearing Report on the future of higher education(National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education 1997) on the grounds that it is a mainstream educational policy document typical of the corpus collection and it also uses the word *learning* a great deal. However its size (two-thirds of the corpus) and tight focus on higher education skewed certain of my analyses, which I therefore modified as I describe below.

"Words occur in characteristic collocations, which show the associations and connotations they have, and therefore the assumptions which they embody" (Stubbs 1996:172). However, as Stubbs points out, this is a generalisation which conceals important principles. Different forms of a lemma occur in general usage with different frequencies and have different collocations, and individual forms are not distributed evenly across different grammatical positions in the clause. I will therefore be considering the meaning of *lifelong learning* and of *learning* in general in terms both of their connotations and how these are modified by the words' syntactic behaviour.

For analytical purposes, the Cobuild corpus provides its own software but I analysed my own corpus using *Wordsmith Tools* (Scott 1997). I used concordances, collocation lists and displays of collocations, and various types of word lists.

Learning and *lifelong learning* in the reference corpus

We have already noted the strikingly greater frequency in the Cobuild corpus of the finite and non-finite forms of *learn* relative to its nominalised form. A gloss needs to be added here regarding the unreliability of the tagging which differentiates between the verbal and the nominal form of *learning* in the Cobuild corpus. While 491 occurrences are identified with apparent accuracy for the noun, 3738 are identified for the verbal *-ing* form, but of which a great many turn out on human inspection in fact to be nominal. This does not make any difference to the point being made, namely that there are still substantially more verbal than nominal occurrences, but it does make it impossible without a lot of manual processing to draw confident conclusions about the statistical significance of the collocations of *learning* as it occurs in its two forms in the reference corpus. I therefore present these collocations in terms of their frequency of occurrence, but the reader needs to take my comments about t- scores with this caveat in mind.

Learning when entered as an untagged search word, i.e. as either noun or verb, collocates frequently and significantly with

> *children, difficulties, disabilities, language, methods, process, school, skills, teaching*

and also with the grammatical words *and, how* and *to*. All forms of the lemma *learn* taken together, 12952 occurrences, collocate most frequently and significantly with pronouns and grammatical words like

> *to, about, how, from, you, that, we, I, they,*

with *learn/learned/learning to* being both the most frequent and having the highest t-score of 44. The collocation "picture" provided by the software shows these collocations to

establish a range of patterns four words to left and right of the node word, with a human agent/Senser before it and a Phenomenon coming after. *Learn* and its inflected forms is something which is thus associated particularly with children and school, with being a problem if someone can't do it, and with generic ways of carrying it out.

Learning tagged as a noun collocates with the same range of nouns as when it is untagged, that is either a noun or a verb. However, as a noun its most significant grammatical collocates are *of* and *and*. *How* and *about*, indicators that the mental process has a Phenomenon, are absent from the list and the concordance lines show that *learning* rarely has a Phenomenon; when it does, this generally some leisure or sporting activity (*learning to sail*), some kind of improving social activity (*learning to master ourselves*) or childhood developmental process (*to speak, the alphabet)*. The collocation picture is very different from that of the lemma *learn* in general. As well as the significant local nouns I have just noted, *and, in, of* and *the* are very frequent all around the node, suggesting that *learning* occurs in heavily pre- and post-modified nominal groups. This is hardly a surprising finding for an abstract noun, and the nominalised forms of other highly frequent verbs of mental process like *know, read* and *write* show more or less identical patterns. The contrast, however, with the far more frequent Senser-Phenomenon uses of the verbal forms of *learn* is clearly attested.

In order to investigate *lifelong learning* in its most current usage, I used the main Cobuild corpus, since this is continually updated. However, 330 million words produced only 30 entries, from both British and US sources. The grammatical behaviour and collocations of these few occurrences nevertheless prefigure those of the 819 occurrences in my specialised corpus: *lifelong learning* occurs in nominal groups modified particularly by phrases with *of, and* and *for* and collocates with preceding head nouns relating to management (*infrastructure, resources*), planning (*initiative, consultation paper)*, reification (*culture, notion, reality*) and the occasional implication of a Senser (*taking responsibility for their own learning, enjoyment, the elderly)*. The recentness of the concept in the UK is attested by only one occurrence in the 100 million word British National Corpus (Oxford University Computing Services 1995) which was completed in 1994.

Learn and *learning* in the Lifelong Learning corpus

I initially examined the occurrence of *learning* in the LL corpus using two types of wordlist, a straightforward frequency count and a "keyword" count. The latter is carried out by Wordsmith by plotting the frequency count of all the words in the research corpus against a "reference" word frequency list extracted from a 95 million word corpus from *The Guardian* newspaper. Statistical procedures in the software identified which words in the LL corpus were "key" to that corpus, relative to the much larger reference corpus.

In terms of raw frequency, *learning* accounted for around half a per cent of the total words in the LL corpus, and if the Dearing Report was excluded, it was the most common lexical word. Without Dearing,

> *learning, education, training* and *people*

were the most common of the remaining 300,000 words in the corpus, accounting in order for between 1 and 0.3 per cent of the total. With Dearing included, the words

> *education, higher, learning, students, institutions, research* and *funding*

were added within these proportions of the total words.

The five top lexical "keywords" plotted against the *Guardian* list were, with Dearing included, *education, higher, learning, students, institutions* and without Dearing included,

learning, education, training, lifelong, skills. Both the frequency and the keyword lists reflect the contrast between the institutional base and specified target audience of the higher education report and the broader approach towards learning adopted in the more general texts.

The LL corpus produced 5533 occurrences of the lemma *learn*, of which 4760 (78 per cent) were *learning*, all but a handful of which appeared from a manual scan to be nominalised forms. The word *learning* was spread across all the texts, with 36 per cent of occurrences being used adjectivally. This heavy use of the nominalised form of *learning* emphasises the difference between a written official style and the wide range of genres represented by the Cobuild corpus, and thus the difference between the way in which the business of learning is discussed in formal educational discourse and in everyday life.

The three Cobuild definitions I discussed earlier demonstrated that the behaviour of *learning* varies as to whether it acts as noun or adjective and whether it has a Senser and a Phenomenon. I will look at each of these in turn.

Learning acts most frequently as an adjectival noun in the LL corpus when preceding the following words:

> *society, opportunities, accounts, activities, age, bank, culture, centres, methods, difficulties, providers, materials, programmes*.

In the Cobuild corpus, *learning* as an adjective modifies problems—*disabilities* and *difficulties*—and experiential aspects of learning—*curve, methods, process, experiences*. However, while *learning* in the LL corpus maintains its collocation with *methods* and *difficulties*, it modifies more institutionalised concepts. These, particularly the combinations with *society, age* and *culture* form "grand soundbites" of *learning*, where the human subject is subsumed within superordinate and all embracing social, cultural and temporal entities. *The* or *a learning society*, which accounts for more than four per cent of all the occurrences of *learning*, is found in all the sources, but mainly in the European and Newcastle material. The Dearing Report on the other hand, although actually entitled *Higher Education in the Learning Society*, uses *education* more than 8000 times but mentions *society* less than 400, more than 200 words down the frequency list. *The Learning Age* is claimed entirely by documents produced by and for the Department for Education and Employment, and is also the only expression which invariably occurs with the definite article. The Fryer Report monopolises *a learning culture*. These "grand soundbites" are mostly the goal of developmental processes, preceded by verbs or nominalisations of verbs such as *build, develop, sustain, create, establish*.

While it is unrealistic to offer interpretations of texts based purely on word frequency lists, it is certainly tempting to suggest that the lists hint at differing and contested emphases within the official discourse of learning. These suggestions might be as follows. The European texts address themselves to learning as a major social issue, sometimes in a surprisingly reflective and critical spirit (European Commission 1997?), in which connection we might recollect that Margaret Thatcher was opposed both to the European Commission and to the idea of "society". The same emphasis on broad social issues is also true of the Newcastle texts, which offer a critique of both European and UK policies of lifelong learning, as if critique is more likely to be in social terms. Dearing appears to focus on established *institutions* with an established role—*research*, established participants—*students* and *funding* problems, an apparent concern with managing what exists already. Fryer spells out the need to change assumptions, attitudes and behaviour, while New Labour's *learning age* sets out a much larger claim to a place in history.

Learning as adjective and noun

The adjective *learning* is productive in its word associations. As well as all the familiar nominalisations like *learning process* and *learning technology*, we have

learning accounts, learning agenda, learning bank, learning cities, learning forums, learning fund, learning institution, learning nation, learning partnerships, learning regeneration.

Learning as an adjective has developed from a mental process to a process of government.

When *learning* is a noun modified by an attributive adjective, it is even more productive, extending the scope of its participation into all aspects of an individual's life. In the Cobuild corpus about 70 per cent of occurrences of *learning* are unmodified by any preceding adjective, and when an adjective occurs it is sometimes qualitative but usually classifying—*open learning, rote learning, language learning*. In the LL corpus, in contrast, *learning* rarely occurs unmodified. Whatever the learners' age

post-16, post-school, lifelong, lifetime, adult learning

wherever they may be

community, company, family, group, home, individual, local, workplace learning

and however they want it

formal, inclusive, informal, interactive, on-line, open, self-directed, vocational learning,

learning can be everywhere and anyhow

community based, employer-based, home-based, course-based, institution-based, IT-based, knowledge-based, leisure based, pub-based, work-based.

These are not isolated examples but recur over and over again, even though their different frequencies vary according to their different sources. Such highly classified and specified *learning* has become a commodity with a universal market.

Phrasal pre- and post-modification

Learning in the LL corpus shows the same predictable pattern of nominalisation as in Cobuild, although with variations. The top few lines of its collocation frequency picture consist almost entirely of the same prepositions as in Cobuild, except that the words *lifelong, society* and *teaching* occur up in the same top frequencies as these grammatical words. There are a huge variety of nominalising patterns with *learning*, demonstrating its huge productive capacity not just in adjective-noun combinations but as a combiner with prepositional phrases in both pre-and post-position. In fact *and* and *of* are not just present because they are some of the most frequent words in the English language, but because they emerge statistically as "keywords" within the corpus. Plotted against the Wordsmith *Guardian* reference list they are within the first thirty-three of the fifty-nine keywords with a log-likelihood (see Scott 1998) of more than 2000 ($p > .0000001$). This provides additional quantitative evidence of the elaboration of nominal groups through the use of *of* and the high frequency of phrasal coordination with *and* in the corpus. Phrasal coordination of this kind has also been noted by Tribble (Tribble 1998) in a study of project proposals submitted to the European Union. He suggests that in persuasive texts of a formal written kind such reiteration is a syntactically emphatic and economical way of multiplying the evidence in the writer's favour.

And participates with *learning* in a range of combinations, 330 of which (7 per cent of all occurrences of *learning*) are *teaching and learning* or *learning and teaching*. Although these occur in more or less the same quantity across the whole corpus, most *learning and teaching* occurs in the Dearing report, while the other documents rarely if ever use the expression in this order. The two words are used as if they were just one—*teaching-and-*

learning—endlessly repeated in a combination whose comprehensive validity as a unitary concept is unquestioned. This has the effect of making *learning* on its own something different from when it occurs as part of *teaching-and-learning*, when, as we have seen, it doesn't seem to have anything much to do with teaching at all but more to do with the government's regulation of individual lives. *Teaching and learning* in contrast seems to be associated with processes of management, in which it is rarely a head noun but acts as a premodifier, so that we have *teaching and learning*

> *activities, Council, materials, methods, strategies, systems*

or, far more often, as part of a prepositional post modifier

> *a practical tool for teaching and learning, the formation of a teaching and learning council, the enhancement of effective teaching and learning, changes in teaching and learning methods, the evaluation of teaching and learning systems, a society of teaching and learning, excellence in the management of learning and teaching, initiatives with new technology for learning and teaching.*

Where *learning* is used adjectivally, the more than a hundred nominal groups with *and* occur in various patterns. These are mostly pairs of ADJECTIVE + NOUN

> *programme design and learning provision, career development and learning information, building facilities and learning resources*

or more complex combinations with prepositional phrases

> *people with disabilities and learning difficulties, the establishment of an entitlement to career planning and learning opportunities up to level 3, the range of qualifications and learning experiences.*

There is something relentless about this vast number of phrasal coordinations. *Learning* is always entangled with something else, a means to some other end, a complement to some other activity. Because of its formidable combinatory capacity, *learning* as an agentless nominalised process has taken on the status of an entity participating in an immense number of other processes, and by becoming a noun has thus, as Halliday points out, acquired an additional semantic feature (Halliday 1994:353).

Across the corpus, *of* is the most frequent grammatical word immediately preceding *learning*. The roughly forty nouns which precede it fall fairly equally into three of Sinclair's main descriptive categories of headwords in nominal groups with *of (Sinclair 1991)*: supporting nouns or nouns which have little meaning alone and are rarely used as such (*kind, quality, style of*), focus nouns (*benefits, programmes, providers of*), and propositional nominalisations where a process is implied but without mention of an agent (*delivery, management, promotion of*). These last two collocation sets reinforce my earlier comment that the use of *of*, again a relentless pattern, constructs learning within a framework of providing goods and services.

Learning as an abstract object

The repetition of *learning* takes place mostly in rheme or non-head position. This textual givenness of *learning*, without much explanation as to what it actually is, reinforces the sense that what the official literature is actually about is the restructuring of much broader social processes and institutions. The point at issue is to establish *the learning society*, not to shed much light on what *learning* actually means. Indeed in the *learning society*, *learning* has become a qualifier of other words, and like so many grammatical metaphors, has obscured its meaning in the process. *A learning society* is agnate with *a society which learns* or *a society for learning* or *a society where learning takes place*, but which? "This kind of highly metaphorical discourse tends to mark off the expert from those who are

uninitiated" (Halliday 1994:353). In Fairclough's terms *learning* is an example of an "anonymous and invariant" procedure", an abstract object which has become a "focus of cultural attention and manipulation... (which can) be cultivated, enhanced, looked after... bring people good fortune, make them happy" and so on, and in so doing itself become a goal and even an agent. The largely non-theme position of *learning* implies its taken-for-granted status as given information (Fairclough 1992:182-185), so that "grammatical metaphor, nominalisation, and theme conspire, as it were, to background" fundamental questions as to its value and purpose.

Fairclough takes up a typically strong position and, following Thompson (Thompson 1996:165-166) I would not want to argue that metaphorical and congruent ways of expression are more or less "real". They are just different. Neither is "better" than the other, each being used in different contexts for different purposes. However, it is certainly true that fundamental questions are, unsurprisingly enough, not asked in the official lifelong learning literature. Except, that is, in the report of the European Commission's recent Study Group on Education and Training, which comes clean, for example, about the the ever-smaller numbers of pupils required by the labour market (European Commission 1997?:Section VI). When Halliday says that "a significant feature of our present-day world is that it consists so largely of metaphorically constructed entities" (*op.cit*:353), the uses and meanings of *learning* are the kind of thing he has in mind.

Lifelong learning in the Lifelong Learning corpus

Lifelong learning occurs 830 times in the LL corpus, 17 per cent of all the occurrences of *learning*. By far the most of these, more than 300, are in the Fryer report, although as with *learning* there is a reasonably even spread across all the sub-corpora. By definition, since *lifelong learning* is a free-standing nominalisation, we would not expect it to have Sensers and Phenomena, so I will discuss it with reference to what we have already noted with regard to *learning* since it manifests similar semantic and syntactic behaviour.

Where *learning*'s top lexical collocates across the whole corpus were

lifelong, teaching, society, opportunities, development, individual, accounts,

in the case of *lifelong learning* these were

culture, European Year, support, development, should, promoting,

suggesting a less established phenomenon. By far the biggest collocation of *lifelong learning* is the reiteration forty times in the Fryer report of *a culture of lifelong learning for all*. This hints at the most frequent syntactic patterns of its premodification, a quarter of which are with *of* and an eighth with *for*. The headwords preceding *of* are a repeat of the goods and services variety just noted with *learning*, but now there are a number of additions. These imply the newness of the concept

adoption, challenge, champion, Festival, implementation, means, sponsors, Year

and refer to processes of reflection on it

awareness, concept, definition, form, idea, issue, origin, picture, promise, vision.

This thinking process is also found in expressions with *about lifelong learning—data, debates and documents*—and *on lifelong learning—debate, findings, white paper, report, research*—although where these imply critical reflection, they are found mostly in the Newcastle documents (see Appendix). Critique, as I have said, is largely absent in the official *lifelong learning*documents, but the corpus does manifest a value-related dimension

in the relatively high frequency of *should*, mainly in the Fryer report and often projecting intensifying words:

> *lifelong learning should be added explicitly, should aim in particular, should contribute positively, should embrace educational policy initiatives, should be for the many, should be for all aspects of life, should figure as a core element, should play a full role.*

The actors in these obligatory processes are often generic institutional groups

> *stakeholders, funders, sponsors, providers, local authorities*

and rarely individuals, a point to which I will return below. We could also characterise them as institutional generators of human capital. Nevertheless, apart from the "social group" adjectives which modified *learning—community, company, family*, etc,—they are the nearest we have come so far in the four-word collocation span to human participants in the learning process, however remote they may be from actual Sensers or learners.

Unlike *learning*, *lifelong learning* enters into many fewer relationships coordinated by *and*, with *education and lifelong learning* being the main pre-coordination and a few post-coordinations like

> *and the development of a learning society, and industrial development, and professional development, and wider participation.*

And apart from Fryer's *culture of lifelong learning for all*, there are few of the relentless phrasal coordinations we noted with *learning* on its own.

For, like *and* and *of*, is the only other preposition which is comes up as a keyword of the LL corpus in the Wordsmith *Guardian* comparative list. While this is partly because of the repetition of *lifelong learning for all*, there are other collocations of interest. Where the *for* expression is preceding, the headwords are the now familiar administrative and managerial notions:

> *foundation for, framework for, planning for, policy for, proposals for, priorities for, resources for, strategy for, support for lifelong learning.*

and since *lifelong learning* is a new arrival and seems to need more arguing for, we also find examples such as

> *case for, demand for, need for, opportunity for, pressure for, solution for lifelong learning.*

A search of the Cobuild corpus for NOUN + *for* suggested that *for* in this position is associated with several sets of meanings, such as: providing, enabling, taking responsibility, controlling; wanting, searching; justifying. The first of these meanings is the most common among the *for* expressions with *lifelong learning*, while the *demand, need, pressure* collocations also represent the wanting/searching meaning. The emphasis of these preceding *for* collocations is that *lifelong learning* needs to be enabled and organised, institutions need to take responsibility for it, and there are social reasons for wanting it. These patterns suggest that the people who do the learning are not agents but patients, the goals and beneficiaries of processes which are as likely to be controlled by someone else as by themselves. A propos of *for*, we might also note that the erstwhile Department OF Education and Science and the Department OF Employment have been amalgamated into one mega Department FOR Education and Employment.

When *for* is in post-noun group position, two of its meanings concern beneficiaries or purposes, and these suggest a somewhat different dimension to *lifelong learning*. As well

as the iterations of *lifelong learning for all*, the LL corpus includes mention of rather more specific beneficiaries

> *individuals, families, businesses, communities and society as a whole; non-participant groups, workers*

and purposes

> *lifelong learning for change, citizenship, early retirement, its own sake, life, personal development, personal fulfilment, pleasure, the future, the information society, work.*

Here we are getting closer than before to the participants in the learning process, not just generic groups like *workers* but *individuals* and *families* who, unlike institutions, can experience such things as *personal fulfilment*. Here are last are some *learners*.

Participants in learning: *learners*, *people* and *individuals*

Learners are the obvious participants in learning, and they are mentioned almost 500 times in the LL corpus, 9 percent of the total occurrences of the lemma *learn*. Most of those who participate in learning are identified not as learners but as *people* (1450 occurrences), and also as *individuals* (705 occurrences). If we are looking for actual individuals, *he* and *she* (78 and 23 occurrences respectively) are not found among the *learners*. They are almost always the subject of projecting clauses in which the Sayer or Senser is some figure of authority like a government minister or academic source making a statement. Individual people are present only when they have something important to say.

Learners in the LL corpus are almost always plural, except in the rarely used generic form *the learner*. 10 per cent of them are *adult learners*, and they are also

> *non traditional, individual, lifelong, part-time, vocational, work-based.*

Learners do not necessarily come fully-fledged and some are

> *aspiring, new, potential, prospective, under-represented, would-be* or even *non-learners*.

They have *needs* and *achievements*, although the implied contradiction of the two might be taken either as an act of criticism or of patronage. They are also acted upon rather than acting, and a quarter of their appearances is in clause- or sentence-final position. Government agencies, educational bodies, employers and families should

> *celebrate, recognise, approve, encourage, manage, support, guide, enable, motivate, be responsive*

to learners and should offer and provide things like *support*, *qualifications* and *resources*. They frequently need to be *enabled*

> *to access learning opportunities, to achieve their goals, to build credit, to combine different types of qualifications, to gain recognition, to participate in education and training, to purchase basic information technology, to return to education, to share experiences, to study in breadth, to succeed*

The top lexical collocations of *learners* identified by Wordsmith corroborate this somewhat passive and unfulfilled role, and indicate important distinctions between *learners*, *individuals* and *people*. The collocation lists are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Top lexical collocates of *learners*, *individuals* and *people* by frequency

Learner(s)	*Individuals*	*People*
learning	employers	young
adult	learning	education
support	education	learning
needs	higher*	higher*
potential	needs	training
non-traditional	groups	skills
week*	families	investors*
vocational	organisations	qualifications
individual	society	opportunities
achievements	lifelong	number

** these words are particularly salient because of either particular formalised activities such as Investors in People, Adult Learners Week or because the list was skewed somewhat by the size of the Dearing Report within the corpus.*

Not only are *learners* needy, they are also associated with *vocational* activity but not *education*, unlike *individuals* and *people* who seem altogether more up-market.

Individuals are referred to in one in three cases in the corpus in association with, and thus in contrast with, social collectivities of some kind. This happens either in two-word collocations with *and* or in lists. About half of these lists are employment related, hence *employers* as their top lexical collocate. Overall the individual is linked by *and* to a wide range of social groups and institutions, so that we have *individuals and*

> *businesses, companies, employers, families, groups, organisations, society, their families, their employers, institutions, the labour market, the nation.*

Individuals and their associates tend to go in threes:

> *individuals, companies and sponsors; public authorities, voluntary groups and individuals; employers, other providers of training and individuals; individuals, enterprises and government; individuals or teams, individuals or groups of employees; individuals, the nation and the future; individuals, their families and the state.*

Individuals have abilities and responsibilities. They *can*

> *accumulate funds* (in an individual learning account), *be helped, bring influence, contribute resources, turn* (to learning opportunities), *enter learning, find opportunities, obtain qualifications, pay their contribution,*

they *must*

> *be able to think more in terms of systems and position themselves both as a user and as a citizen, take responsibility for learning,*

they *need*

> *to be adaptable, aware of their own competencies, manage their own careers, develop self-management skills, keep their fingers on the pulse of change,*

they *should*

> *accept more control over the development of their own learning, invest in their own learning,*

and they *will*

> *be called upon to make a contribution, have to change radically, need to take a greater share, need to take increasing responsibility.*

Individuals are followed nearly 70 times by *to*-infinitives, mostly projected by an earlier occurrence of a finite verb like *enable* or *encourage*. What they should be enabled to do is to

> *acquire relevant skills and knowledge, assemble their qualifications, choose their method of learning, contribute more to the costs of their education, develop their capabilities, invest more in their human capital, master technical instruments, manage rights and responsibilities, pay more for their own training, raise their sights, save and borrow for investment in their own learning, sustain the learning habit, take ownership of their own lifelong learning.*

where we might note how *master technical instruments* sticks out as an unusual example of a specific purpose for learning.

This notion of responsibility as an agent in the learning process is interestingly paralleled by Campanelli and Channell's findings that *learn to* is often preceded by a phrase denoting obligation (*op.cit* 32), and also provides further evidence to support the Cobuild dictionary's linking of *learning* with exercising responsibility and modifying attitude. Curiously, the emphasis on individual responsibility appears more marked in the collocations of *individuals* in the British documentation, and less so in the European.

People are supposed to be doing all these socially responsible "learning" things in the corpus but usually because they should be *helped* (32 occurrences). Enablement, encouragement, opportunity and so on are directed towards more general processes, so that *people* are able to

> *develop awareness of themselves, learn at home, recognise and tackle inequalities, find their way in the information society, play a full part in their community, interpret and understand (information), get the skills, switch occupation, cope with far-reaching transformations, gain the certificate, use computers, take responsibility, study while they are employed, invest in their own training, have higher expectations, switch occupation*

so that it is possible for them to

> *participate in lifelong learning, broaden their skills and enjoyment, engage in culture, creative and leisure activity, have access to networking arrangements, learn, help to shape the society, interact with machines, undertake employment, make use of the new technologies, take control of this investment, participate in their communities, learn and lift barriers, live fulfilled and balanced lives, see what makes the world tick (No Dearing)*

People, unlike *individuals*, thus seem to have not just responsibilities but also rights and broad social roles. They also more often have some specifically identified purposes for learning like using computers.

Individuals are entities with implied attributes, many of which can be inferred from the twenty to thirty occurrences of *individuals are*

able to participate, likely to respond, likely to choose, more highly educated, moving from formal education (to informal), *the key to the UK's competitiveness, able to exercise responsibility,*

defining relative clauses with *individuals who*

apply their skills, are employed, are confident, are reflective, benefit, can afford to pay a higher proportion, draw on the collective memory, pay their own fees, possess advanced skills, seek higher education, succeed in opening up opportunities, take on board employability, thrive on learning, will be aspiring, wish to pay, have particular links with, or positions in, the community

genitive uses of *individuals'*

attitudes, capacity, decision-making, general level of knowledge, independence, learning accomplishments, lives, needs, performance, self-esteem, skills and talent,

and post-modifying phrases with *with*

considerable experience, credit cards, different needs greater independence, higher level capabilities, highly specialised knowledge, more education, particular skills, real discretion over resources.

Not all of these structures in the corpus are positive. There are instances of

individuals with a bad debt record, with a disability; individuals who may be locked in by geographical ... circumstances, who have been discouraged from learning; individuals' lack of qualifications

but these are rare.

The word *individuals* thus has a strongly positive semantic prosody in this corpus, which can be extended to include the notion of a highly rational, responsible and socialised being, the perfect millennial citizen of the western world. *Individuals* are cited as agents in combination with other social groupings, invariably groupings with social power and status, and allocated parallel participant roles, attributes and activities. Nevertheless, while they do play an agent role, my impression is that they are not agents most of the time. Since I was using an untagged corpus and could not quantify clues such as theme or passive voice, I was not able to check the data quantitatively for the relative occurrence of these groups as actors or patients. However, the few passives which have occurred in this analysis are perhaps significant, where *individuals* are

embedded in an organisation, enabled to pursue topics, expected to participate, and *required to pay.*

Individuals do not seem to have much opportunity for self-determination, and their very rationality seems to consist of exercising their status and responsibility within a controlling framework.

While *people* share *individuals'* attributes, they have more of these and they are less tidily utilitarian, so that there are *people's*

aspirations and very identities, behaviour, chances to shape and manage their lives, confidence in themselves, creativity, critical faculties, cultural horizon, demands, fears, Giro cheques, health, homes, independence, interests, lives as consumers, motivation, perception of where they 'fit', social integration, wants.

People's abilities and responsibilities are much less emphasised, with relatively little about what they *can* do, and hardly anything about what they *must*, *need* or *should* do. *People* does not have either a positive or negative semantic prosody, and the word is not associated one way or the other with ideals of the rational citizen. While *people* enters into many positive collocations, often the same as those for *individuals*, its negative collocations are also noticeably frequent. People *are*

> *less capable, already in ghettos, especially vulnerable, regularly deterred, paid one-third of the minimum wage,*

there are a lot of *people with*

> *difficulties, disabilities, little previous achievement, literacy problems, low skills, special needs,*

and *people who*

> *feel that learning is not for them, have failed, have foundered in the school system, have not achieved, have under-performed, miss out on education, need help with basic skills, suffer mid-career blues, think that education isn't for them.*

People, unlike *individuals*, are located in many different geographical and social backgrounds. They come *from*

> *Bangladesh, Black and Asian communities, different member states, higher socio-economic groups, Keynsham, lower-income families, Morocco, overseas, professional and managerial households, the Province,*

they are *in*

> *an advanced society, Britain, employment, Europe, further and higher education, in initial training, Japan, lower grade... jobs, our society, positions of influence, retirement, Scotland, subsidised jobs, the UK, the workforce, the world, wheelchairs, work,*

and *of*

> *all ages, Europe, this country, Scotland, the North, the European Union.*

People are classified in various ways. Firstly, in terms of these social or geographic locations, which may be positive, negative or neutral. This is in contrast to *individuals* in their social locations as one group within a collection of other groups. *People* fall into types, and in this corpus they are first and foremost *young*, a word which occurs more than 350 times immediately preceding *people*, around a quarter of all occurrences of the word. They are also

> *older* (the next most common premodifying adjective), *disabled, educated, employed, qualified, skilled, disadvantaged, unemployed*

whereas apart from a handful of *educated individuals* in Dearing, *individuals* are syntactically unqualified. *Individuals* are important for what they do and how they conduct themselves as social beings; they seem to require neither qualification or quantification.

People are certainly quantifiable and 100 concordance lines are taken up with *many*, *most* and numbers in *million*. Again these words project all kinds of social comments about quantities of *people*, comments which are positive and negative and of a range and vagueness not possible with the more tightly specified role in the corpus of *individuals*.

If we compare *people* and *individuals* in the Cobuild corpus, their linguistic behaviour shows both differences and similarities. In the 57 million words of Cobuild there are 82640 instances of *people* and 2041 of *individuals*. This is a vastly larger relative difference in their frequency than in the LL corpus, where *people* and *individuals* occur in a ratio of two to one, demonstrating just how important *individuals* are in the discourse of *lifelong learning*. In terms of their collocations the most frequent premodifiers of *people* in Cobuild apart from grammatical words are *other, some, many, most, young, more, million,* confirming the quantification phenomenon and the use of the word with *young*. The lack of any other particular lexical word suggests that in general use too, *people* is precisely that—a generalised and varied social group. *Individuals* collocate with *groups, private, families and companies,* suggesting not just that *individuals* are generally interpreted as part of wider social collectivities, but also that *lifelong learning*, where they play such an important role, is deeply implicated in social structures.

Human capital and lifelong learning

What links *lifelong learning* most particularly to the theory of human capital is the linguistic behaviour of its participants, implicit and explicit, rather than more than the behaviour of *lifelong learning* itself. This is especially so with *individuals*, who are linked with a range of social groups and rational processes which are described in terms of productive economic activity, effective decision-making and employment-based social networks, all circumscribed by the expectation and acceptance of control by more powerful stakeholders and societal forces. These are features of what appear to be both the individualistic and the social network orientations of human capital models.

The common collocations of *individuals* produce a semantic prosody of the socialised and self-improving citizen. This is carried to great lengths in the use of *their own*, which occurs around 440 times within the predicate of *individuals*, where it expresses the notion of personal responsibility for learning

> *accept their own responsibility, look single-mindedly at their own 'portfolio' careers, assess their own progress, learn at their own pace, achieve beyond their own expectations, create their own jobs, determine their own future, develop their own careers, responsibilities for their own future, pay more for their own training, form their own opinion, identify their own development needs, improve their own lives, gain confidence in their own learning abilities, continue even in their own time, invest in their own training/learning/skill development/future, learn in their own way, have a financial stake in their own learning, make their own decisions, manage their own learning process/career portfolios, meet their own costs, modify their own educational process, take charge of their own lives, plan the development of their own learning, assume ownership of their own learning, own their own destiny, pay their own fees, pursue their own aims, shape their own careers, start their own businesses, learn through their own efforts, own their own personal computer, understand their own learning styles, upgrade their own learning technology skills, use their own time.*

I have quoted so many of these examples to demonstrate both how pervasive the roles and responsibilities of *individuals* are in the discourse of *lifelong learning* and how far metaphors and descriptions of economic life pervade their collocation patterns. Here we have the endogenous process, individuals with the right attitudes beavering away producing growth and efficiency from inside the workplace, from the bottom up. There is little evidence here for the People's Millennium. Actually it's the individual's millennium and they are clearly expected to get on with it.

Learning and its participants, however, are not wholly conceptualised in this way. While *learners*, and especially *people*, are certainly designated as the subject of social engineering

to get them to learn, they are interpreted neither positively nor negatively and they appear with problems, rights and feelings as well as responsibilities. These linguistic patterns represent broader social roles and values for both the learning process and its participants, more in line with the "social capital" theories which Schuller (1996) identified as contrasting with human capital. Equally, though, social capital's concern with "mutual obligation and civic engagement" is also found in the collocation patterns of *individuals*.

Lifelong learning thus does draw on key notions from the theory of human capital, but mostly by extrapolating these into more diffuse social phenomena. Many of the institutions which are associated with *learning* are social or political rather than corporate, and *learning* is conceptualised as contributing to the development of institutions which mirror the state rather than the workplace. Indeed *lifelong learning* is presented as a response to social upheaval and uncertainty just as much as to economic necessity, and *learning*, while there is an emphasis on its vocational role and its relevance to the workplace, is supposed to be everywhere and for everyone and not just for workers at work.

Conclusion

Human capital is of course a metaphor, but one which like *learning* carries strong implications of human involvement, even if not agency. *Learning* and *lifelong learning* have lost their Sensers and Phenomena, but what have they replaced them with? We know that human capital is about generating productivity, but it is still not much clearer to me what *lifelong learning* is supposed to generate except lots of learning and a docile democratic citizenry. And I remain not much wiser about what knowledge and skills people should be acquiring and how this is relevant to managing the complex and uncertain future at which the corpus documents occasionally hint. This is the value of nominalisation to the policy maker—"non-finite and detached from the here-and-now, inherently generalised, and non-negotiable" (Thompson *op.cit*: 172).

"By searching out frequent collocations, we can glimpse the recurrent wordings which circulate in the social world, and glimpse how linguistic categories become social categories" (Stubbs *op.cit*:194). This has been my purpose with regard to *lifelong learning*. While there are obviously limitations on this kind of study, such as the kind of linguistic representations I have studied and my elite textual sources, these limitations provide further avenues to explore. It would, for example, be interesting to carry out the kind of focus group research utilised by Campanelli and Channell and by Myers (Myers 1998) to investigate just what *learners* and *individuals* make of the concept of *lifelong learning*. There are, however, more participants in *lifelong learning* than the learners themselves, and a closer examination of how all the "social actors" are represented would also add a fuller perspective to my participant analysis.

Lifelong learning is only one of several cultural keywords to do with learning, and in particular it has important similarities and differences with *education* and *training* although not explicitly contrasted with these. I suspect, for example, that in a combinatory sense *learning* is far more linguistically productive than either *education* or *training*. This is both a reflection of and an encouragement to its ubiquity in the institutions and social processes which find their place in official documents about *the learning society*. Once you invent the learning society, then everything is about learning. A comparison of the linguistic behaviour of *education, training* and *learning* would shed light not only on the major assumptions and propositions in current debates about managing the future but also on their subtler intertextualities, ambiguities and contested emphases.

Learning is syntactically no longer a process, which means that syntactically it must be a participant in another process. Thus language enacts and constructs the developing role of learning in social and economic life. Reflecting on the dimensions within which keywords can be studied, Stubbs draws attention to two major themes in the study of late twentieth-

century society: "the changing lifecycle of the individual, and personal identity; and the professionalization of modern life", and the changing relations between what is public and what is private (*op.cit*:182-183). Both have emerged in my analysis of *lifelong learning*, but only implicitly, and, where such linguistic analysis meets contemporary social theory, much territory remains to be explored in ways which I have not been able to attempt.

I will leave the last—and socially, politically, historically, educationally and culturally comprehensive—word to the rather anxious European Commission document I referred to earlier (European Commission 1997?). It is entitled *Accomplishing Europe through education and training*.

> *If lifelong learning becomes an aim fully adopted by governments and takes on tangible form, the coming years will become a benchmark in the history of education. Lifelong learning holds the potential to change the public's entire understanding of education... Many analyses of contemporary and future social and cultural models underline the need for this wide, all-encompassing view of education as a developing, lifelong process. Modern society will be a learning society...* (para.143).

Or so they say.

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APPENDIX 1
Lifelong learning quotations

DfEE. 1998. *The learning age: a renaissance for a new Britain*. London: HMSO.
"Learning is the key to prosperity—for each of us as individuals, as well as for the nation as a whole. Investment in human capital will be the foundation of success in the knowledge-based global economy of the twenty-first century". (Blunkett)
"Lifelong learning means the continuous development of the skills, knowledge and understanding that are essential for employability and fulfilment"

Fryer, R H. 1997. *Learning for the twenty-first century: first report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning*. London: DfEE.
"... a culture of lifelong learning... is essential to help the country and all of its people meet the challenges they now face, as they move towards the twenty-first century.... (It) can act as a resource in the midst of change, helping people both to cope with change and in their strivings to shape it to their own devices, as active citizens. As things stand, although a good many people in this country already achieve high levels of competence and qualifications, through school and post-compulsory education, there still exists a deep 'learning divide' in our society."

European Commission DGXXII. 1997. *Towards a Europe of knowledge*. 1998. Brussels: EC.
"... the aim of developing lifelong learning which the Union has set itself and which has been incorporated into the Amsterdam Treaty, expressing the determination of the Union to promote the highest level of knowledge for its people through broad access to education and its permanent updating. Policies to restore the employment situation—whether macroeconomic policies or specific labour market action—must be part of an in-depth medium-term strategy to enhance the knowledge and skills of all Europe's citizens."
Three dimensions should be emphasised: knowledge, citizenship, competence.

HEFCE. 1997. *Promoting the learning society*. 1996-97 Annual Report. Bristol: Higher Education Funding Council for England.
Along with many universities and colleges, we recognise that the stakeholders in higher education include employers... To meet this need for lifelong learning at work, we are supporting continuing vocation education programmes in nearly 100 institutions...
There are further opportunities for lifelong learning through continuing education courses that do not lead to a qualification...
We have allocated... £3.8 million to 46 development projects to widen access to higher education".

European Commission DGXXII. 1997. *Presentation of the European Year of Lifelong Learning by Mrs Edith CRESSON*. 1998. Brussels: EC.
In launching this year of reflection and debate no fixed definitions of lifelong learning are laid down. A broad concept is put forward which includes all forms of learning, both formal and informal—that is, learning occurring in the family, at work or in the wider community.

APPENDIX 2
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- *Moser Group.* http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/mosergroup/index.htm.
- ***Further Education for the New Millennium: The Government's Response to "Learning Works".*** http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/kennedy/index.htm.
- ***Higher education for the 21st century. Response to the Dearing Report.***
- *Learning DIRECT.* http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/learningdirect/index.htm.
- ***UK Presidency in Education and Social Affairs: Lifelong learning.*** http://www.open.gov.uk/dfee/ukpres/lifelg.htm.

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- Eur-op News 4/97. 1997. ***Education: lifelong learning.*** European Commission DGXXII. http://europa.eu.int/comm/opoce/en/opnews/497/r381.htm#22.
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All downloaded from http://www.ncl.ac.uk/~nfjc/ftp/download.html.

- **Armstrong, J** 'The competitiveness project'
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- **Coffield, F** 'A tale of three little pigs: building the learning society with straw'.
- **Cooper, B** 'The new deal'.
- **Healy, T** 'International experience & comparision'.
- **Maguire, M** 'Employee development schemes'.
- **McGivney, V** 'Adult participation in learning'.
- **Schuller, T** 'Social and human capital'.
- **Stuart, N** 'Implications for policy & practice'.
- **Trivellato, P** 'Japan as a learning society'.

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